

Indigenous Heritage

The story of the Kincumber site begins with the original owners of the land, the coastal Guringai people of Darkinjung Nation who utilized the rich resources of “King Coimba Creek”, later Cockle Creek, today known as South Kincumber. The shell middens represent a time capsule of a shellfish diet extending over thousands of years. Aboriginal people had a diet rich in fish, shellfish, wild figs, yams, possums, birds and reptiles.

Significant sites in this region are protected under the Heritage Act as sacred to Indigenous people.

1. Old School Building

As you enter St Joseph’s through the old gates you will see to your right the Holy Cross Church built in 1842. Mary MacKillop is known to



have worshiped there and it is one of the oldest Catholic Churches in continuous use in Australia today.

On your left, is an old brick building erected in 1900. This was the first brick building on the site which added a school hall, refectory, dormitories, and bathrooms underneath. The boys carried the 30,000 bricks from the wharf and made limestone for the mortar from local shells. Today this building houses the museum and a conference hall. You will notice as you walk along the drive, an old well nearby which was built in 1903.

In 1896, the first chapel was built somewhere nearby. The original wooden presbytery that was built in the early 1880’s housing the sisters and the boys from 1887 was believed to stand some where over near the sandstone buildings.



2. Croke Cottage

As you walk along the drive you will see a cottage to the left that was lived in by the Kincumber Parish Priest. Father Patrick Croke was appointed Chaplain at St Joseph’s in 1945 and for 25 years supported many boys and later girls at St Joseph’s. He was much admired by all who lived here and remembered fondly by many. His grave is located in the cemetery grounds of nearby Holy Cross Church.

3. Sandstone Building

Walking further along the drive to the right you will see a large 2-storey sandstone building of evident historical significance.



By 1908, this building was erected to provide greater facilities for the Sisters and the boys. A southern wing with a new entrance and balconies was added in 1922.

Evidence of a large kitchen fireplace at the rear of the building was uncovered during renovations in 2003.

There is also an old underground well and other original fireplaces located in some guests rooms. This building offered space for the Sisters community on the first floor with views across Brisbane Water. Mary MacKillop was known to have sat on the veranda in the last years of her life. In the early years of St Joseph’s she was rowed across the water many times.



4. Wharf

If you look towards the water down the “avenue” on the left, you will see a boatshed and wharf area. This wharf was used by many boats but particularly St Joseph’s Pioneer Ferry Service run by the Sisters and manned by the boys, in operation from 1905 until 1960’s.

The concrete stairs that lead down to the wharf near a small gate, are the original stairs that were used as the entrance to the Home from Brisbane Water.



4. The Chapel

Next door to the Sandstone building is a large brick chapel which was built in 1926 and opened and blessed in 1927.

Sr Ann Joseph Waters was Mother Superior during this time and the building represents her desire to build a monument of great esteem to God. At the time it was considered extravagant and costly to build and even today you can still see the beautiful architectural features of this building.

Beside the chapel is a “Lourdes” Grotto.

6. Swimming Pool and Large Underground Water Tank

Leaving the Chapel and walking further around the drive you will see the Centenary swimming pool over to your far left beyond the labyrinth. This was built in 1966 in celebration of the centenary of the Order of the Sisters of St Joseph. A path to your right will take you past the large concrete water tank - built in the mid 1930's, it provides water for all of the property. In 1924-5 the sewage and septic system was installed along with the electric light plant. Looking to your right you will see the MacKillop wing built in 1961 which today has modern guest rooms.



7. Dairy

To the east beyond the water tank is the "modern" dairy built in 1958. The original dairy was registered in 1904 and burnt down in 1910. Milking sheds, dairy and poultry yards were upgraded during the 1950's. In 1968 the dairy herds were sold and Hereford breeding commenced. Over the years this has steadily reduced to just a few cattle grazing the pastures. Across the paddocks to the east is a Cricket Pitch used by the older boys that has recently been uncovered. These paddocks were once cultivated with a variety of crops which enabled the home to be self-sufficient. The poultry and duck farm was established in the early 1900's by the Farm Manager, Jack Rea.

8. Old Stable

From the dairy you can see a small stable which was once a much larger stable where the cow bales were stored. Today a small statue of Mary MacKillop overlooks the water. From the stable looking back past the camphor laurel tree is a dam where once a piggery was located. Nearby modern buildings have been established through renovations in 2003.

The renovations replaced those built in 1951 which comprised a dining hall, servery, shower room with hot water and also new freezing and cooling rooms. Many additions have been made to St Joseph's over the years.



9. Boardwalk & Stations of the Cross

From the stable you can see a boardwalk beside the dam. The boardwalk leads to a path along the water's edge where you can follow the Stations of the Cross leading to the boatshed further south. On this path are the concrete remains of the old dairy. The timber used on the crosses was taken from the old dairy, reflecting both the historical and religious significance of this site.

Acknowledgements

Zeena Elton and Frank Kennedy

The Heritage Trail

St Joseph's Spirituality & Education Centre Kincumber South



Mary MacKillop

The spirit of Mary MacKillop has a special significance to the whole South Kincumber peninsula.

The Sisters of St Joseph have maintained an important link to Kincumber since "Mother" Mary and the Sisters first established the site as an Orphanage for boys (later known as St Joseph's Boys Home) in 1887.

The area has more recently been designated by Gosford Council as 'Mary MacKillop Peninsula'.